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# Communicator

The Institute of Scientific and Technical Communicators  
Summer 2014

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case study



# Our Core Skills – TCEurope's colloquium

This yearly colloquium was 25th April in Aix-en-Provence, France.

Jennifer O Neill and Jean-Paul Bardez share the subjects covered.

*The veritable explosion of technological advances in the past few years has changed the face of technical communication – or has it? Have technical authors been replaced by forums? Is the paper manual dead? Are our tools up-to-date? What is a technical communicator: a writer, a blogger, an information curator, a content strategist or something different? These questions and many more are forcing technical communicators to re-evaluate their work and their roles.*

This year's colloquium chose to focus on technical communication basics more than on specific technological solutions or trends. Six speakers presented their view along this theme to an engaged audience.

Theresa Cameron kicked off the day with a talk on our core skill, writing. In her presentation, *Write/Right for Life*, she spoke about the important role writing has played to record society's thoughts and work over the millennia. But it's not a skill we should take for granted, "Although in Europe the literacy rate is between 98 and 99%, many people cannot write well". This presents us with many opportunities to use our skills. For example, consider volunteering to get experience writing for different requirements and domains. She finished by saying that we should be continually practising our skill in order to write right!

Jennifer O Neill advocated terminology as the building blocks of good content in *Taming Terminology*. Although for many it is usually associated with translation, terminology management starts with the source content. She used her company's experience of numerous mergers and acquisitions to show how much organisational change can impact terminology. Unfortunately terms are too often buried in style guides, difficult to share, and glossaries are not adequately maintained. If you don't tame your terminology, you risk being badly mauled by it as inconsistent and inaccurate terms run wild throughout your content.

Julien Robert and his team presented the open-source publishing software SCENARI in his paper *Collaborative work with the SCENARI publishing chain*. The software is designed for single sourcing and collaborative writing between teams. It can output in a variety of formats and is aimed at heterogeneous writing teams, field experts and localisation teams. The software was developed in France and is available in French and English.

Alessandro Stazzi talked about *Skills and Tools for Technical Communicators in Web 2.0 era*. He argued that although the traditional functions of technical writing still have an important place, we now must engage much more with

how people actually use technology. He spoke from the perspective of the web and software documentation. His presentation discussed user experience, mobility and integrated help systems.

Jean-Paul Bardez presented his view on *Training in Verbal Skills for Technical Writers*. He is a lecturer at Blaise Pascal University in Clermont-Ferrand, France, and he described his experience of teaching his students about the importance of verbal communication. Such skills are important when collecting information as part of our work when creating documentation. He described several of the group exercises he uses to help students talk about their work and analyse what they have written.

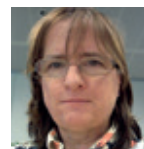
Last, Toni Byrd-Ressaire talked about *The eBook Explosion: Why the Publishing Industry Needs Technical Communicators*. This communication made a list of transferable skills technical communicators can use in the new publishing landscape, gathering self-publishers, and independent small publishers. In this changing environment, the publishing process remains the same, even if the commercial model is changing: books still need to be reviewed before they are released. Technical communicators can take an active role in this process and re-evaluate work and roles using their core skills. **C**

## Further reading

TCEurope colloquium 2014 presentations  
[www.tceurope.org/colloquia/41-2014aix](http://www.tceurope.org/colloquia/41-2014aix)



Theresa Cameron - Write/Right for Life



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